Do a Safety Checkup!

If you are visiting your childhood home this holiday season, take a little time to make sure that the house is not becoming a safety hazard for your parents.

Home Safety

- Ensure handrails are installed on stairways and in the bathroom.
- Ensure smoke and carbon monoxide detectors are in working order.
- Ensure lighting is adequate.
- Install safety knocks and shut-off switches in the kitchen.
- Clear the home of dangerous chemicals.
- Organize and properly store medications.
- Remove locks from interior doors to prevent accidental lock-ins.
- Remove portable space heaters & other devices that can cause fires.
- Clear clutter to reduce fire hazards.
- Clear out furniture & other objects from walkways to prevent falls.

Future Planning

Talk about planning for the future with your parents during your holiday visit. Some questions to ask are:

1. What will you do if one, or both of you, become ill or have an accident?
2. What will you do if you need to move to a nursing or memory care facility?
3. What will you do with your house, or your belongings, if you move to a care facility?
4. Who will represent you and be responsible for your finances and legal documents if you can no longer do so (i.e., a power of attorney)?

Emergency Planning

- Put together a list of who to call if an emergency should occur.
- Post a list of local emergency phone numbers near your parent's land-line phone.
- Consider programming emergency numbers, as well as your phone number, into your parent's phone.

Finances

- Consider taking inventory of their financial and legal documents.
- Consider asking for permission to become a signer on their bank accounts and paying their bills for them.
- Sit down and talk with your aging parents to ensure their finances are in order. Consider asking them:
- Are you able to pay your mortgage/rent and taxes?
- Are you able to pay your utilities?
- Are you able to purchase your medications?
- Is your savings account/retirement fund holding up to your expenses?

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